



Rediscovering the “Lost Art”

As I look out across our Army, I continue to be amazed at the superb job our Soldiers are doing each and every day. Those who make up our total force — not only our Leaders and Soldiers, but also the Families and Civilians who support them — are all great Americans who represent the best our nation has to offer.

One thing that strikes me most about our Soldiers today, especially the younger generation, is how willingly they accept the responsibilities of modern military service. Nearly every year since fiscal 2005, more than 100,000 new Soldiers have entered our force at an average enlistment age of 20 to 21 years old. This means we have an immense number of junior Leaders in our current ranks, a trend that will continue for the foreseeable future. And, as our force structure evolves into the ARFORGEN model, these young Leaders will become more important than ever in keeping all our Soldiers safe and in the fight.

There's no doubt our junior Leaders are doing great things, especially in our combat theaters. Their resolve and hard work have helped sustain an unprecedented pace of continuous deployments amid constant conflict, and their leadership has provided both continuity and reassurance for the Soldiers in their charge. As significant as combat operations are, however, we cannot forget the importance of what happens at home station, where the majority of our fatal accidents are occurring.

It's not that our young Leaders don't want to make a difference at home. Rather, the necessities of war have made garrison leadership a “lost art” for junior Leaders because they haven't had a lot of experience at home station. But to tackle accidental losses and other issues facing our force today, we have to get back to the “left of boom” at home — where safety truly begins. And to do that, we have to help our young Leaders understand their responsibilities beyond the battlefield and what leading from the front means, both on and off duty.

The most important steps junior Leaders can take in leading at home seem easy enough: taking the time to sit down with their Soldiers and Families and getting to know them on a personal level. Through this one-on-one interaction, Leaders can identify high-risk Soldiers and develop intervention plans tailored to the individual's unique needs and interests. And to really have an impact on Soldier decisions during off-duty hours, junior Leaders must pay attention to the little things that matter. Even a short welfare call to check in on a troubled Soldier can have an impact on his or her decisions. It's all about knowing how Soldiers think, what they think and reinforcing the safety message around the clock, every day, in theater and at home, on and off duty.

Our young Leaders can't be effective without the help of experienced and senior Leaders, however. They need mentorship and guidance to successfully mentor and guide their own Soldiers. There's no doubt our Army is busier than ever, but we simply have to find the time to grow our junior Leaders into the well-rounded, professional leadership cadre needed for the conflicts of both today and tomorrow.

When it comes to accidents and the vital role all Leaders play in risk management, no one stands alone. There are some great products out there to help Leaders and Soldiers at all levels in the fight against preventable accidents and high-risk behavior, including those found in the "Cornerstone" section of the USACR/Safety Center website (<https://safety.army.mil>). The three corners — Soldier, Leader and Family — each feature interactive media products such as Soldier risk assessments, safety training information and links to other tools designed to keep the total force aware and safe. One new tool available for our single Soldiers is the BOSS Safety Factor kit, just launched in September. Please take a look and let us know what you think. Your feedback is always welcome and helps us provide you the information you need.

We're embarking on a new fiscal year this month, and there's no better time to renew your commitment to safety and the needs of the junior Leaders and Soldiers in your command. Each of you is doing fantastic work every day for our Soldiers, Families and Civilians, and I'm confident this year will be another great year for our Army. Thank you!

Army Safe is Army Strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. T. Wolf', with a stylized, looping flourish extending from the end.

WILLIAM T. WOLF
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding